

# NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER **UPDATE**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### From the Front Office

Save the Date: 2019 Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Conference **3**

### EpiData Center

EpiData Center (EDC) Team on Watch in Flu Season **5**

### Health Promotion and Wellness

Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Promotes "30 Tobacco Free Days" During Tobacco Free Living Month **7**

### Command Outreach

Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Promotes STEM for All Ages **8**

### NECE

Navy Entomologists Team Up to Build Disease Detection Capacity in Honduras **10**

### NEPMU News

Forward Deployable Preventive Medicine Unit East Completes Field Training Exercise **11**

Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Six Industrial Hygienist Defuses an Explosive Situation **12**

In Case You Missed It... **13**

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## From the Front Office

*By Capt. Todd Wagner, Commander, NMCPHC*

As I complete my second year in command of NMCPHC, I have had the opportunity to reflect on some of the incredible accomplishments within Navy and Marine Corps Public Health over the past two years.

This has certainly been one of the largest periods of change in military medicine, but despite the change and additional requests for information and data during proposed transitions, our incredible group of public health professionals both here at headquarters and in our nine field activities have stayed the course to answer the call of the Nation. NMCPHC continues to provide world-class public health and preventive medicine policies, processes and subject matter expertise to ensure our fighting forces and their families are ready and safe.

Though the exact trajectory of where Navy Public Health will land organizationally is still unknown, our mission remains necessary and true. Now, more than ever, the threats facing our deployed, garrison forces and their families remain significant. Though the focused emphasis on readiness has increased, NMCPHC continues to be squarely in the readiness business and thus our relevance and the need for our services and expertise is greater than ever. This includes both the readiness



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of our staff and the readiness of the units we support in alignment with the National Military Strategy. I look forward to the challenges forthcoming in the New Year as we look to embrace the opportunities that come along with change.

I am excited that Capt. Bob Hawkins, our current deputy commander, will get to “fleet up” to the commander position. Capt. Hawkins has done an incredible job as our deputy commander and I am quite sure that the Center and Navy Public Health will benefit greatly from his leadership and continue many of the great initiatives that are currently underway to help NMCPHC to become an even greater place to work!

My best to all as we head in to the holiday season and hope this upcoming year is the absolute best for all of you, as well as your family and friends.

## Command Master Chief's Corner

*By Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO) Marsha Burmeister, NMCPHC*



Welcome to fall! As leaves begin their transition from green foliage to a wonderful color prism, take time to reflect on all you are transiting through on a personal and professional level. Take a moment to thank those who have impacted your life and do something anonymously or without expecting anything in return. This may seem simple; however, one never knows when a small unexpected gesture could make all the difference. Reach out to the community in preparation for the upcoming holiday season, there is always a void needing to be filled. Be a positive transformer.

This is also a time of change for military medical forces. We must continue to strive to become a better and more prepared enlisted force. Are you utilizing technical competence, innovative thinking, communication and networking skills? How are you better preparing your replacement? Are you providing input for evolutions, such as the review and update of school house curriculum and advancement exams?

Is the information current and relevant? Are you gathering deck plate information to share with those who have a seat at the discussion table?

Congratulations HMC Kristen Matson (NEPMU-5) with Medical Service Corps In-Service Procurement Program Selection, Health Care Administration (Direct Commission).

On October 13, the Navy celebrated its 243rd birthday. “Forged by the Sea” was this year’s theme. Ensure you reflect and take the time to share our naval traditions and heritage. Honor those who have gone before us, of which some paid the ultimate price. They, along with those serving today, continue to safeguard our freedoms, along with protecting those in foreign lands.

As the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)/Defense Health Agency (DHA) transition continues, ensure that we focus on a ready force and the jobs we are doing are relevant to guiding principles. The one thing that is constant is change. Look for ways we can improve processes in the upcoming year.

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Updated/implemented/refresher on policies and NAVADMIN's include:

- NAVADMIN 267/18 Revised Guidance for Administrative Separation
- NAVADMIN 239/18 Deployability Assessment and Assignment Program
- NAVADMIN 233/18 Navy Uniform Policy and Uniform Initiative Update
- NAVADMIN 232/18 MYNAVY Career Center Beta Launch
- NAVADMIN 229/18 Enlisted to Medical Degree Preparatory Program (EMDP2)
- NAVADMIN 226/18 FY19 GMT Requirements\*  
\*Complete your face-to-face GMT and annual Counter Intelligence Awareness Briefing
- NAVADMIN 217/18 Flat Rate Per Diem
- NAVADMIN 196/18 Rate Modernization Progress Update
- NAVADMIN 192/18 Increased HYT Wavier Option Opportunities for E7-E9
- NAVADMIN 199/18 Recreational Off-Duty Risk Management

I hope each of you are able to spend some time relaxing during the upcoming holidays and have a plan to keep you and your loved ones safe (i.e. designated drivers). Happy Holidays; I cannot wait to see what we will accomplish in 2019!

## SAVE THE DATE

# NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH 2019 Conference March 26 - 28, 2019

Quota request information and conference website coming soon!



**NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER**  
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE





# Upcoming NMCPHC Trainings and Conferences

## DOEHRS-IH Training

**December 3–7, 2018:** Naval Dental Clinic  
Norfolk, Va.

**January 28 – February 1, 2019:** Training  
Support Center San Diego, Calif.

## Disease Reporting System internet (DRSi) Webinars

**January 29, 2019:** Topic to be determined

## Health Promotion Advanced Training

**February 7, 2019:** NEPMU-2 Norfolk, Va.

## Occupational and Environmental Medicine (OEM) Fundamentals Course

**June 24-28, 2019:** Naval Medical Center  
Portsmouth, Va.

## ShipShape Program Facilitator Training

**February 8, 2019:** NEPMU-2 Norfolk, Va.

## Spirometry Training Course

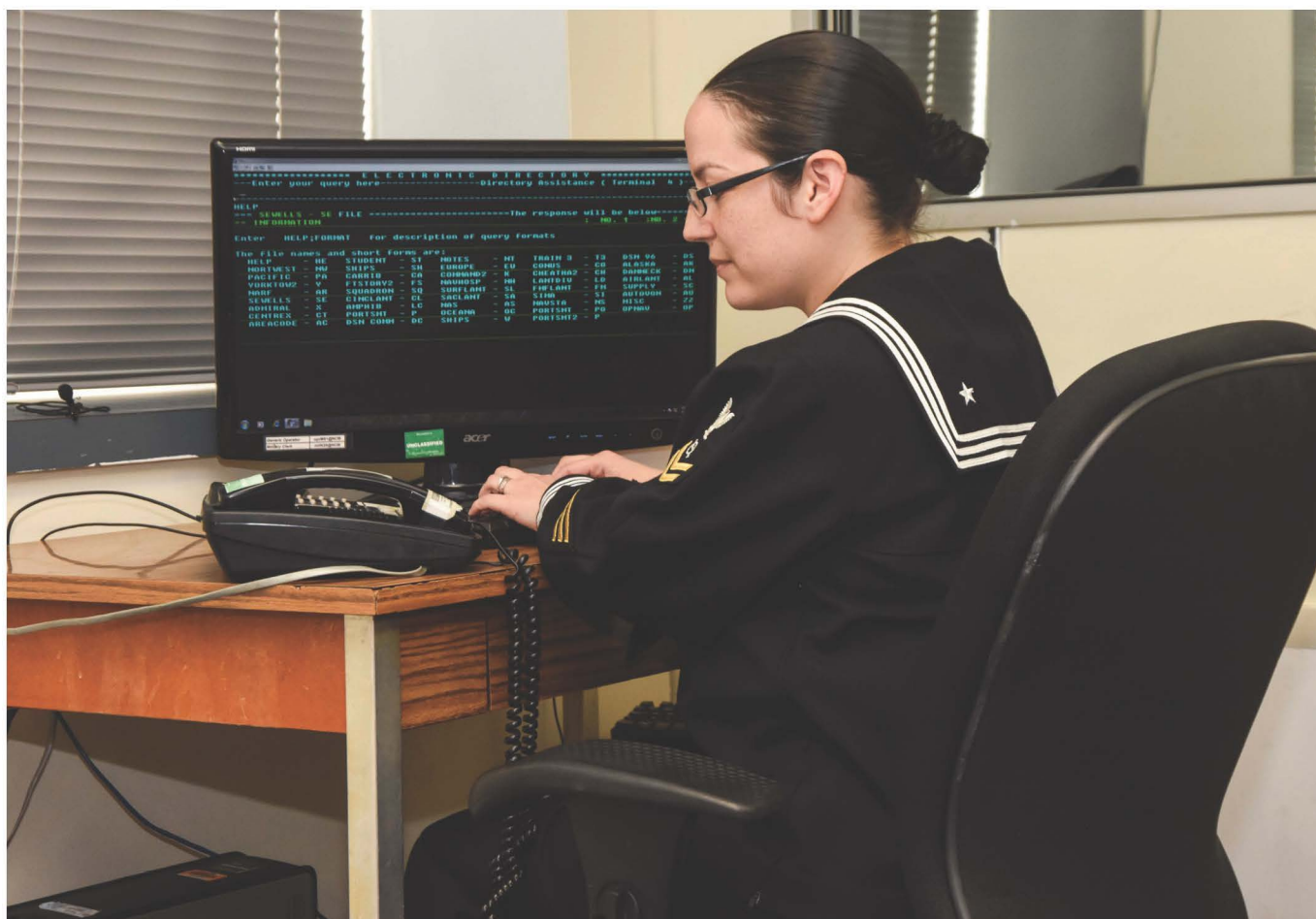
**December 4 – 6, 2018:** Basic Course,  
Portsmouth, N.H.

**December 7, 2018:** Refresher Course,  
Portsmouth, N.H.

## Tobacco Cessation Facilitator Training

**December 4, 2018:** Norfolk Branch Health/  
Medical Clinic Naval Station, Va.

**February 8, 2019:** NEPMU-2 Norfolk, Va.



(U. S. Navy photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Rafael Martie)



# EpiData Center (EDC) Team on Watch in Flu Season

By Angela Schlein, NMCPHC EpiData Center

The 2017-2018 influenza (flu) season was deadly, with an estimated 80,000 flu-related deaths and 900,000 patients admitted to hospitals in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In the Department of the Navy (DON), beneficiary population, flu case counts were the highest since surveillance began in 2008, mirroring increased national trends and indicating a season high in both volume and severity.

**“The intent of our surveillance is to determine the true impact of flu on service members and their families,”**

To lessen the risks of flu infection and protect mission readiness, military leaders, health care providers and public health partners must have a timely, full understanding of flu threats and trends. To meet this need, the EpiData Center (EDC) flu team provides tailored surveillance products regularly to several customers, including the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED), Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC), Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch (AFHSB), Fleet leadership, Navy Medicine regions, local hospital staff and others.

“The intent of our surveillance is to determine the true impact of flu on service members and their families,” said Gosia Nowak, EDC department head. “When we verify and report the extent of the impact, Department of Defense (DoD) leaders have

the knowledge they need to implement additional and targeted preventive measures as necessary.” Each year, the EDC flu team produces more than 100 routine surveillance reports. One of the group’s core products is the weekly DON Influenza Situation Report (SITREP), a summary of key flu metrics and severity indicators in the Navy and Marine Corps active duty and beneficiary populations.

“The EDC has the capacity to perform near-real-time flu surveillance using multi-source data,” said epidemiologist Rebecca Payne. “In addition to medical records, we have access to pharmacy transaction data, vaccination records and other data that build a full picture of population health and flu status. Reports like the weekly SITREP can assist leaders in deciding what flu-related actions, if any, to take.”



*(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class M. J. Lieberknecht)*

The EDC has produced the weekly SITREP every flu season since 2008, and the report has evolved as customer needs change and new surveillance capabilities emerge. For example, the team recently redesigned the reports to include more user-friendly

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graphics that improve reader comprehension and decrease report production time. To improve case detection and identification processes, the team also regularly reviews and updates surveillance algorithms, analysis methods and report templates to reflect current trends.

**“It’s satisfying to work on something that provides direct impact to our beneficiary population.”**

Every flu season is different and military beneficiaries are a unique group. The military community varies greatly in overall demographics and health risk factors compared to the general public, so the EDC flu team specializes in identifying and addressing the specific needs of each season and the DoD community. For example, the team tracks progress to the annual DoD active duty vaccination goal and learns facility-specific coding practices to ensure case capture.

“Our EDC flu surveillance is actionable information that translates to real decisions about military population health and readiness,” said EDC

epidemiologist Kathleen Creppage. “While we provide standard reporting for all of our partners in public health, we also have the flexibility to deliver specific, tailored analyses to help healthcare leaders make better-informed decisions about flu prevention and treatment.”

One such example of customized support was a recent request by Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP) for a weekly analysis of flu burden on its campus, which the hospital plans to use in pushing out a new staff masking policy. Rather than issuing a blanket requirement for staff masking (for example, masking from October to April), which might over- or under-estimate the true period of need, NMCP uses its facility burden metrics to tailor masking requirements and schedules to local flu trends, reducing the risk of healthcare providers spreading the virus.

“Our stakeholders provide quick feedback, so we’re able to make adjustments to our processes as we go and provide the best service we can as the flu season progresses,” said Stephen Rossi, EDC staff epidemiologist. “It’s satisfying to work on something that provides direct impact to our beneficiary population.”

To review the weekly DON influenza SITREP, please visit <https://go.usa.gov/xPR4q>.

References:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/spotlights/press-conference-2018-19.htm>



# Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Promotes “30 Tobacco Free Days” During Tobacco Free Living Month

By NMCPHC Public Affairs

The Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) is supporting the “30 Tobacco Free Days” event hosted in partnership by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Office on Smoking and Health, Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The goal of the event, which is being promoted on Facebook, is to encourage military service members, veterans and their family members to quit using tobacco products. The Facebook event offers encouragement, motivation and tools to support quitting tobacco and to remain tobacco free throughout the month of November.

The military and veterans have historically used tobacco products (cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco such as chew, spit, and dip) at higher rates than the U.S. adult population. This makes NMCPHC’s Tobacco Free Living month in November a perfect time to promote the CDC, DoD and VA partnership towards tobacco cessation.

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Twitter. There is also a Tobacco Free Living Toolbox online providing resources to anyone promoting or interested in tobacco cessation. Check out those resources here: <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/Pages/hp-toolbox-november.aspx>



(U.S. Navy photo by Lance Cpl. John Robbart III)

“The Navy is promoting this event as another strategy to encourage tobacco free living,” according to Dr. Mark Long, Health Promotion Tobacco Program Manager at NMCPHC.

“There are many effective ways to quit and stay quit,” said Long. “The use of Facebook and social media offers another viable way for those interested in quitting.”

The NMCPHC Tobacco Free Living website has a list of materials, resources and tools to assist with tobacco cessation.

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<https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/tobacco-free-living/Pages/Tobacco-ForYouSelfHelp.aspx>

Please join the CDC's "30 Tobacco Free Days" event and encourage your friends, family members and shipmates to participate. <https://www.facebook.com/events/1880713211977321/>

## Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Promotes STEM for All Ages

By NMCPHC Public Affairs

The National Science Foundation reports a growing trend in 8th grade level skills in the sciences and math as well as a growing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) job market.

Once an unpopular subject area among young students, STEM is being made "cool" again with the help of the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC). As part of NMCPHC's STEM initiatives and community outreach programs, military and government command personnel volunteer their time to participate in programs such as the Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY) Homeschool Support Group, Naval Air Station Oceana's airshow, guest lectures at local universities and various other STEM events within the local Hampton Roads community. Their goal is to expose students of all grade levels to STEM related studies to in hopes to encourage a career in public health related professions.

An annual event NMCPHC participates in is the Naval Air Station Oceana Air Show STEM Laboratory. The STEM Laboratory has been offered to Chesapeake and Virginia Beach Public School fifth grade students at the annual airshow since 2016. The laboratory provides over 5,000 local students the opportunity to engage with STEM education and professionals. On September 21, 2018, NMCPHC once again participated by hosting an interactive table featuring hands-on STEM and public health related activities. NMCPHC's STEM Laboratory table offered students a place to explore probability with health analysis staff, measure sound levels with help from the occupational and environmental health department,

engage with industrial hygiene personnel to learn the importance of personal protective equipment, as well as look at samples under a microscope to explore general chemistry with a toxicology professional.

**“Being a positive mentor to a student who may not necessarily have support to pursue their interests makes participating in STEM outreach worthwhile.”**

“The most popular activity at the command's table was learning about noise and using the sound level meter because the kids got to scream into the meter and compare the loudness of their scream in dBA

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to the levels typically produced by equipment such as a chainsaw or jet. Most of them were trying to achieve jet status! Seeing them have fun with STEM makes the experience worth it for us,” said Mrs. Jena Brunson, NMCPHC industrial hygienist and STEM initiative coordinator.

NMCPHC also assists the NNSY Homeschool Support Group by providing STEM related activities for students off all ages and will soon begin attending the group’s planning meetings in order to integrate health promotion and nutrition outreach, more STEM activities and education on the various fields within public health. As initiative coordinator, Brunson heads the efforts for the command and brings not only her professional expertise, but student friendly activities gathered from attending an educational workshop hosted by the United States Naval Academy STEM Center for Education and Outreach. Demonstrating the value of STEM education and NMCPHC’s dedication to community outreach, Capt. Wagner, commander, NMCPHC, and Master Chief Petty Officer Burmeister, NMCPHC, attended the group’s inaugural visit with the NNSY Homeschool Support Group students and regularly participate in various activities.

“Having exposure to STEM education at an early age is important because it peaks the interest of students who may not consider science and math to be fun, which will hopefully lead them to choose more math and science classes as they progress through each school year. Ultimately, we’d like for the students we engage with to consider a science based career in the future. Being a positive mentor

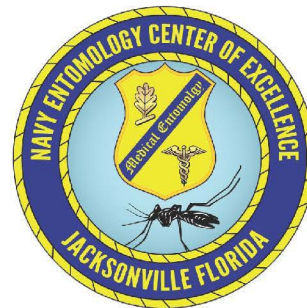
to a student who may not necessarily have support to pursue their interest makes participating in STEM outreach worthwhile. You never know whose lives you may impact by talking to them for just a few minutes,” said Brunson on the importance of early STEM education.

Individuals across the command are frequently asked to guest lecture STEM related courses at the local universities. These lectures span disciplines such as risk communications, toxicology and industrial hygiene, and provide students the opportunity to learn from real life scenarios and public health professionals.

For more information on the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center, visit: [www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/](http://www.nmcphc.med.navy.mil/) or find NMCPHC on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NavyAndMarineCorpsPublicHealthCenter](https://www.facebook.com/NavyAndMarineCorpsPublicHealthCenter).

# Navy Entomologists Team Up to Build Disease Detection Capacity in Honduras

By Lt. Cmdr. Connie Johnson, Navy Entomology Center of Excellence



Entomologists from the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 6 (NAMRU-6) and the Navy Entomology Center of Excellence (NECE) partnered with Joint Task Force-Bravo Medical Element (JTF-B MEDEL) preventive medicine to develop a disease detection capability for the region. This cutting-edge work is supported by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Board-Global Emerging Infections Surveillance (GEIS).

Lt. Cmdr. Michael Fisher, NAMRU-6 entomology department head, is leading the effort to bring molecular capabilities as well as the latest in DNA sequencing technology to Soto Cano Air Base. As a regional capability, this technology will allow personnel to rapidly determine if locally-collected ticks, sandflies and mosquitoes are carrying pathogens of disease importance that can threaten the joint warfighter, Honduran Armed Forces and civilian populations.

"The DNA sequencing technology we propose is highly flexible, ideal for far-forward field sites and can produce results in less than 24 hours," said Fisher. "This has the potential to provide actionable data that can immediately alert the regional public health authorities to prevent large outbreaks and provide commanders a risk assessment threat to their troops."

Leishmaniasis, malaria, dengue and Chagas disease are a few of the diseases known to be present in Honduras.

The ongoing, long-term collaboration between JTF-B MEDEL preventive medicine and the Ministry of Health in the Comayagua district was instrumental in identifying where this new capability can strengthen the public health in the region, building on previous assistance in testing water quality, and the need for rapid, near real-time diagnostics of disease vectors. "I was really impressed with the level of organization of their public health vector surveillance system," said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Joshua Nieto of

NECE. "They have a good network of personnel at the district level collecting insects and relaying the results back to the ministry's headquarters in Comayagua. The piece that is missing is knowing if these insects pose a risk to human health and if so, what."

During the week the team used a variety of techniques to collect over 200 insects that will be analyzed using the DNA sequencing technology by NECE personnel at the USDA's Center for Medical and Veterinary Entomology in Gainesville, Florida.

For more news from the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center visit <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/news/default.aspx>.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/295582/navy-entomologists-team-up-build-disease-detection-capacity-honduras>



# Forward Deployable Preventive Medicine Unit East Completes Field Training Exercise

By Lt. Cmdr. Sarah Godwin, Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Two, Public Affairs

The Forward Deployable Preventive Medicine Unit (FDPMU) East Team One completed its 2018 Field Training Exercise (FTX) October 1-5, 2018 at Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Two (NEPMU-2).

The 14-member team is composed of five distinct components: preventive medicine, chemical (including a radiological subcomponent), microbiology, disease vector and logistical support. Personnel from NEPMU-2 are assigned to this expeditionary platform and “the team has been on an accelerated training cycle with a steep learning curve, however, they still managed to demonstrate competency within their components as well as the ability to interface, collaborate and problem solve,” said Lt. Cmdr. Amy Rogers, FDPMU Team One officer in charge, NEPMU-2.

This year’s simulation was set against the backdrop of Marine Corps forces deployed to Romania. On the first day of the exercise on the field adjacent to NEPMU-2, tents were erected to provide berthing and work spaces for all components. The next day, instructors from the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center (NMCPHC) were on site to observe

and train members of the unit as they worked through scenarios, which incorporated vector surveillance and evaluation of chemical, biological and radiological threats.

“The exercise was an eye-opener for me technically, physically and personally,” said Lt. j.g. Anurag Sharma, FDPMU Team One environmental health officer, NEPMU-2, of his experience in the simulated scenario in which his component was tasked with mitigating health risks from contaminated water and soil. “It helped me determine my strengths and weaknesses in a more powerful way than I could have gleaned from reading through cases or participating in tabletop exercises.”

This evolution comes two months before the FDPMU’s Operational Readiness Exercise, which will be held at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in December. There, the team’s ability to provide force health protection in a theater of operations through rapid assessment, prevention and control of health threats will be tested so they can gain their certification as a worldwide deployable unit.

“I found this training to be one of the most rewarding of my naval career,” said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jermaine English, logistics, NEPMU-2. “It is invaluable to get the opportunity to be hands-on with training like this. I really appreciate that the NMCPHC provides this equipment for us to utilize in a training environment. Didactic is great but nothing beats hands-on.”

The primary goal for establishing the FDPMU was to deliver robust Deployment Medical Surveillance (DMS). The FDPMU was first deployed in 2004 to support detainee operations in the global war on



Lt. Melissa Balint, an Industrial Hygiene Officer, works in the chemical component during the Forward Deployable Preventive Medicine Unit's Field Training Exercise at the Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Two. (U.S. Navy photo by Lt. Cmdr. Sarah Godwin).

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terrorism. The units have since routinely deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and international and domestic military-supported humanitarian operations.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/297230/forward-deployable-preventive-medicine-unit-east-com-pletes-field-training-exercise>

## Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Six Industrial Hygienist Defuses an Explosive Situation

By Lt. Ryan Moore, Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Six Public Affairs

Honiara, Solomon Islands - Seven team members from Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Six (NEPMU-6) performed specialty-specific training during Global Health Engagement (GHE) operations from September 3-7, 2018 at the National Referral Hospital (NRH) in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

During this time, Lt. Derek Dillabough of the industrial hygiene department provided the first-ever training on basic hazardous material (HAZMAT) identification and compatibility as well as essentials of the Incident Command System (ICS) to 45 professionals from the NRH, Ministry of Health and Ministry of the Interior.

At the end of the course, trainees voiced their concern regarding the large inventory of HAZMAT near the laboratory in the NRH. Hospital leadership then asked Lt. Dillabough to complete the first HAZMAT storage facility inspection ever conducted at the NRH. Before the inspection, Lt. Dillabough worked with the team to create a plan of action for quickly identifying the materials likely to be found in the storage area based on the age of the facility.

After the evaluation, picric acid was found in both the storage space and the laboratory which was actively in use. Picric acid was used in the early 20th century as an antiseptic and as treatment for communicable diseases such as herpes, malaria and small pox. It was also used in burn treatments during the early 1900's. While safe as a liquid, it can be dangerous in dry (powder) form, and can explode with even a small amount of friction. Based on the age of the acid and heat in the NRH, five liters of picric acid

had declined from a water based solution to a highly explosive solid.

The NEPMU-6 team was quick to reach out to the Solomon Islands Fire and Disaster Response advisor to plan the removal and disposal of the acid with the help of the Australian Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) team.

As a result of the NEPMU-6 team's efforts and expertise, the hazard of having the explosive chemical stored with other HAZMAT in the NRH was recognized and controlled. Lt. Dillabough and the NEPMU-6 team ensured that the only tertiary care hospital in the Solomon Islands was not crippled by a potentially devastating explosion and chemical fire. They prevented injury and loss of life among patients and staff, as well as the impact of losing key medical staff and facilities vital to the health care system of the nation.

Learn more about how NEPMU-6 is supporting the Navy at: <https://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/nepmu-6/Pages/default.aspx>.



# In Case You Missed It...

## Seasonal Influenza Quick Hit

*By NMCPHC Public Affairs*

Influenza season in the United States typically peaks in January and February, but can begin as early as October. Start getting ready now to ensure you stay healthy and mission ready during this upcoming flu season with this Quick Hit!

Read the full Quick Hit here:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/43353>

## Road to Holiday Fitness Quick Hit

*By NMCPHC Public Affairs*

The road to the holidays can be riddled with potholes and traffic jams, but with proper planning you can map your way to holiday fitness. Check out our favorite tips for staying on track during the holiday hustle and bustle in October's Quick Hit!

Read the full Quick Hit here:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/publication/issues/43882>

## Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Five Sailors Partner with Local Elementary School in Support of Red Ribbon Week

*By NMCPHC Public Affairs*

Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit Five (NEPMU-5) collaborated with Olympic View Elementary School to coordinate its annual Red Ribbon Week, Oct. 19, 2018.

Read about their efforts and collaboration here:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/298063/navy-environmental-and-preventive-medicine-unit-five-sailors-partner-with-local-elementary-school-support-red-ribbon-week>

## Safety Professionals Bring Expertise and Connections to Keene State Students

*By Keene State College Staff*

Recently retired from civil service, Dr. Chris Rennix, an inaugural member and pillar of the NMCPHC EDC is now teaching at a New Hampshire University.

Click here to read about his newest career adventure: <https://www.keene.edu/news/stories/detail/1540564880600/>

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